Trump To Decide on Three Options

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The stalemate in the war on Iran continues. The Strait of Hormuz is (mostly) still closed. The U.S. blockade of Iran related sea traffic, though leaky, is still in force.

Iran is evaluating the war as being far from over:

Overall, the perception in Iran is that the war is far from over; rather, the naval blockade is seen either as a prelude to further escalation or as a trigger that could bring about a new round of conflict sooner rather than later.

Despite the recall of one of its three aircraft carriers in the region U.S. forces are still in the position and ready to strike at a moments notice.

In short – Both sides are ready to restart the war.

U.S. President Donald Trump has three options:

- to continue the blockade of Iran and, in consequence, the blockade of the Strait;
- to launch a new bombing campaign against Iran;
- to declare victory and order his military leave the Gulf.

There are signs that Trump is evaluating all three options but has yet to decide which one to take.

Yesterday the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the U.S. is preparing for an extended blockade (archived):

President Trump has instructed aides to prepare for an extended blockade of Iran, U.S. officials said, targeting the regime's coffers in a high-risk bid to compel a nuclear capitulation Tehran has long refused.

In recent meetings, including a Monday discussion in the Situation Room, Trump opted to continue squeezing Iran's economy and oil exports by preventing shipping to and from its ports. He assessed that his other options—resume bombing or walk away from the conflict—carried more risk than maintaining the blockade, officials said.

There seems to some hope that Iran will falter if the blockade continues. That hop is wrong. Iran has been under blockade at least twice during the last 20 years. During the 2018-2021 'maximum pressure' campaign it could not export oil but revived its production as soon as the siege was lifted.

Continuing the U.S. blockade of Iran will only continue the blockade of the Strait and thereby prolong the depression of the global economy. Rising gas prices in the U.S. will reinforce that impression:

Average US gas prices have hit a new high at $4.23 a gallon, their highest since 2022 and a record since the start of the war with Iran, according to the motor club AAA.

The price of Brent crude, the benchmark that influences the price of gasoline in the US, now stands at $114.60 a barrel, up nearly 25% from the recent low since mid-April. US gas prices a year ago averaged $3.16 a gallon.

Iran has no interest in letting the U.S. get used to a blockade of Iranian traffic. It is considering to break the siege by force:

The continued American maritime piracy and banditry in the form of so-called "naval blockade" will soon be met with "practical and unprecedented action," a high-ranking security source told Press TV on Wednesday.

Iran's armed forces – operating under the Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters as the war command – believe that patience has limits and that a punishing response is necessary if Washington maintains its illegal naval blockade around the Strait of Hormuz, the source said. ...

The high-level source further warned that a continued American blockade and closure of the Strait of Hormuz might ultimately harm the US more than Iran and that a decisive response is deemed necessary by the top military command to completely discredit even this remaining American option.

While keeping up the blockade Trump also asked the military for further options:

President Trump is slated to receive a briefing on new plans for potential military action in Iran on Thursday from CENTCOM Commander Adm. Brad Cooper, two sources with knowledge tell Axios.

Why it matters: The briefing signals that Trump is seriously considering resuming major combat operations either to try to break the logjam in negotiations or to deliver a final blow before ending the war.

Behind the scenes: CENTCOM has prepared a plan for a "short and powerful" wave of strikes on Iran — likely including infrastructure targets — in hopes of breaking the negotiating deadlock, three sources with knowledge said.

There is not the slightest evidence that a new bombing campaign would have any better results than the preceding ones.

Iran has threatened to retaliated to any further attack by a massive launch of ballistic missile against U.S. and Israeli assets in the region. Especially U.S. oil interests in the Arab Gulf states would receive a serious beating.

The third alternative Trump is exploring is to declare victory and retreat:

U.S. intelligence agencies are studying how Iran would respond if President Donald Trump were to declare a unilateral victory in the two-month-old war that has killed thousands and become a political liability for the White House, two U.S. officials and a person familiar with the matter said.

The intelligence community is analyzing the question along with others at the request of senior administration officials. The goal is to understand the implications of Trump potentially pulling back from a conflict that some officials

and advisers worry could contribute to deep Republican losses at the midterm elections later this year, according to the sources.

While a retreat, which would allow a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and the lowering of gas prices, could be sold as a victory to the U.S. public, the global reputation of the U.S. would suffer.

Mojtaba Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, has already declared victory. Key points of his statement today include:

1. First, he claimed that the United States has suffered a "humiliating defeat," which marks the beginning of a "new chapter" in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.
2. Second, he stated that Iran shares a "common destiny" with its neighbors around the Persian Gulf, and that there is no place for "outsiders coming from thousands of kilometers away."
3. Third, he described what he perceives as victory as a prelude to a "new regional and global order."
4. Fourth, he emphasized Iran's control and management over the Strait of Hormuz, arguing that this would make the region safer and prevent "misuse" by adversaries.
5. Finally, he referred to new legal regulations and management mechanisms in the strait that would benefit all regional nations while also generating economic dividends for Iran.

With this Iran would be, after Russia and China, the third country which in recent years decisively defeated U.S. coercion by economic and military means.

The danger for U.S. (and Israeli) hegemony is that others will learn from these examples.

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